

## **Chain of Lakes | Paddle Antrim**

There are many organizations like working hard to protect the Chain of Lakes. Paddle Antrim is one such organization who has a different twist on how to do that. Paddle Antrim is now in its fifth year working to protect our local waterways by connecting people through paddling. They firmly believe that when people are connected their surroundings, they better understand why they need to protect it and take personal responsibility to do so.

So, how do they do that?

### **Getting people out on the water**

Paddle Antrim works to connect people out on the water. In the past four years, over 900 paddlers have joined Paddle Antrim on the water through a variety of classes and events.

#### Paddle Antrim Festival

The Paddle Antrim Festival is their signature event that brings over 150 paddlers from all over the state and country to experience the Chain of Lakes and surrounding communities. Always the second weekend after Labor Day, is a two-day, choose your own adventure paddling experience. Options include paddling one or both days, from 7 to all 42 miles. Local events begin Thursday evening with food, music, and great times and continue through Saturday where it ends with a bang at the Final Bash hosted by top sponsor Short's Brewing Company. This non-competitive paddle offers opportunities for all levels of paddlers and opportunities for kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards. This event is one of the premier paddling events in the state because of all of the generous support provided by the communities, sponsors, and over 80 dedicated volunteers each year!

#### Community Paddles

Paddle Antrim also hosts a community paddling series throughout the summer. These one-hour evening paddles occur at various spots along the Chain, providing opportunities to check out new places. These paddles are free and great for all ages to get out with Paddle Antrim and explore some of their favorite spots with a great group of other paddlers.

#### Skills Classes

With paddling, the right technique is not always intuitive and a little instruction goes a long way to increase fun out on the water. Therefore, Paddle Antrim offers a variety of paddling classes for those ages 7 and up. From kayaks to paddle boards, these classes are fun and great for new paddlers or even those who have never taken a formal class to get out have fun and learn some new skills.

#### Chain of Lakes Water Trail

Since 2016, Paddle Antrim has been working with a diverse group of stakeholders to develop the Chain of Lakes Water Trail so paddlers can have a fun and safe experience out on the water all season long.

A water trail is the aquatic equivalent of a hiking trail, identifying the trailheads, routes, and amenities along the way. While Paddle Antrim is leading the efforts, it depends on the 17 partners who have identified 81 access sites to include on the water trail. All of these partnerships are critical to creating a regional and connected experience.

The Chain of Lakes Water Trail is one of only eight state-designated water trails and the only water trail in Northern Michigan. This non-motorized water trail has over 80 miles of routes through 16 lakes/ivers and something for all types of paddlers.

While the planning for the water trail is complete, Paddle Antrim is leading the next phase to truly “open” the water trail. This includes installation of signs at access sites, development of a waterproof guide, and website/marketing to share with local residents and visitors.

Paddle Antrim has worked with many stakeholders to develop a quality signage system for the trail and will include many additional topics in addition to the water trail information including information on preventing aquatic invasive species, loon protection, paddling safety, cultural/resource information.

## **Stewardship**

### Ripple Effect Mini-Grant Program

Stewardship is the main focus of Paddle Antrim’s mission but as they were forming, they recognized there are a lot of great organizations and experts already working in the region to protect our waterways. Therefore, instead of duplicating efforts, they decided to use a portion of their earned revenue from the Paddle Antrim Festival to help support stewardship initiatives from other local organizations. In the past four years, Paddle Antrim has awarded over \$24,000 to support other local efforts.

### Paddlers and Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention

When they do notice a gap, they do take the lead if it is a good fit. One area is on aquatic invasive species prevention. To date, most education has been focused at motorized boats leaving many paddlers unaware that the Clean, Drain, Dry principle applies to them. Paddle Antrim has taken an active role in promoting Clean, Drain, Dry for paddlers, including bringing a mobile wash unit to the 2018 Paddle Antrim Festival to ensure all boats were properly cleaned before participating. This year they are hosting a workshop July 29<sup>th</sup> to educate paddlers on how to identify and report sightings of aquatic invasive species.

Paddle Antrim is always interested in hearing from you. Want to learn more or are interested in being a volunteer during the Paddle Antrim Festival? Contact Deana Jerdee, executive director at 231-492-0171 or [deana@paddleantrim.com](mailto:deana@paddleantrim.com). To learn more about paddling events and the Chain of Lakes Water Trail, go to [www.paddleantrim.com](http://www.paddleantrim.com).